

2015

# Strategic Plan

Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy



Steve Williams, Mayor

8/24/2015

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*Strategic Plan*

*Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy*

Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy  
City of Huntington

800 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, Huntington WV 25701  
304-696-5540

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August 2015



*Mayor Steve Williams*  
*City of Huntington*

To the residents of Huntington and the Tri-State Region,

Simply stated, our families, our neighborhoods, our communities, our cities and our states are under siege. The epidemic of addiction is now so pervasive that our standard of living, our way of life and our children's future is at stake. Indeed, the issue is clear, but the solution is so very complex.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy was established to assist in creating a dialogue in our community and throughout the region about the pervasive nature of this epidemic of addiction. It is a law enforcement problem that requires aggressive, coordinated, unrelenting pursuit of those who traffic in illegal narcotics. It is an addiction problem that requires an even larger aggressive, coordinated, unrelenting effort to begin saving lives.

We acknowledge that the Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy is a new participant in the drug control battle. This particular effort began in earnest in November 2014 as a response to the constant question, "What do we do next?" In the 10 months since our inception, we have discovered a fundamental truth. There is no shortage of efforts and resources attempting to wrestle this beast to the ground. Every group that is involved from law enforcement to social service agencies, to neighborhood groups, to faith groups, to local, state and federal agencies are all committed to a common goal – the eradication of addiction and the trafficking of illegal drugs. However, the more we met and spoke to individual groups, we found that while all were focused on the same goal. While the collective efforts were well-intentioned, the efforts were disjointed at best. The left hand often times did not know what the right hand was doing.

This is not ever intended to place blame on any one group or any collective effort. Our communities are immensely concerned about addressing this issue. Everyone is embracing the challenge with vigor. However, in the urgency of our individual actions, we have not established a coordinated effort that assures what is happening at the local level is coordinated as much as they are at the state and national level.

We all acknowledge that we must focus on prevention, intervention, treatment and law enforcement. This strategic plan encompasses hundreds of meetings over thousands of hours of interaction of law enforcement officers, health care professionals, social service administrators, educators, elected officials, clergy, community activists, recovering addicts and neighborhood groups. We have established a dialogue that stretches from City Hall to local hospitals, the state capitol, the halls of Congress and the White House. Together, we will discover a path to recovery. This strategic plan is a step in that journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "W".

Mayor Steve Williams

## Introduction

Huntington, West Virginia, a city of approximately 50,000 located on the Ohio River in Cabell and Wayne Counties, is in the midst of a drug epidemic. Due to a deadly resurgence of heroin addiction, an alarming number of overdoses have occurred in Huntington and Cabell County during the past few years. In the first six months of 2015, there have been 474 overdoses in Huntington with 34 of them being fatal. Along with the rise in heroin use a public health crisis has also developed. The number of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV has seen increases in the region and state. Other medical complications due to drug use have also seen startling increases in our area with one of the main issues in our area being infants born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). In the year 2014, approximately 275 such births occurred in Huntington hospitals.

Like physical illnesses, mental and substance use disorders can be prevented and treated. This effort requires a three-pronged approach of prevention, treatment, and law enforcement. If Huntington does not address the impact, this disease will extend beyond the individual addict to his/her family and impose massive costs on the community at-large.

The impact of this staggering data is more than numbers on paper. Each number represents a face in our community, a member of our family, a friend or a coworker. The lives of our residents and future of our city depends on our comprehensive and collaborative efforts now and moving forward.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy has formed partnerships with those involved with addressing the drug issues in our area. This includes first responders, the medical community, area businesses, labor unions, elected officials, judiciary, the United Way of the River Cities, faith-based organizations and many others. These key stakeholders have provided a clear direction that we need to go in the short- and long-term. This strategic plan follows and incorporates the guiding principles, strategies and best practices outlined by these different organizations.

The established goals and actions identified in this strategic plan support sustainable strategies and ideas to address this epidemic plaguing our community. It also provides an opportunity for the City of Huntington to regain a sense of hope and a portal to recovery for those suffering from addiction.

## **Executive Summary**

The Huntington area drug epidemic is no longer someone else's problem. Drug addiction can touch all people no matter their age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, education or location. To address this issue, Huntington's drug prevention efforts should focus on three general principles: prevention, treatment and law enforcement.

Focusing on area youth is at the center of our prevention efforts with outreach programs at community centers and after-school programs. Prevention must also mean preventing individuals who already suffer from addiction from causing irreparable harm to themselves or others. Harm reduction programs are a cost-effective way to prevent the spread of disease and give addicts a portal toward treatment and recovery.

Treatment resources across the state are severely limited and expanding the number of treatment beds is vital for our future. We must also remember that recovery does not end after an addict's stay at a treatment center. Transitional housing and career opportunities are needed to let them become productive members of society.

Strengthening laws on drug dealers while giving discretion to judges on addicts needs to be a focus of the West Virginia Legislature. Local law enforcement expanding diversion programs and the judicial system expanding the role of drug courts are necessary steps to ease prison overcrowding. There must also be a path for individuals who have acquired a criminal record, due to their addiction, to start anew.

## **Vision of Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy**

Decrease the demand and manage the disease of addiction.

## **Mission of Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy**

To serve as a leader for improving the health and safety of individuals by promoting strategic approaches and collaboration to reduce drug trafficking and related crime while promoting prevention and treatment options for addicts.

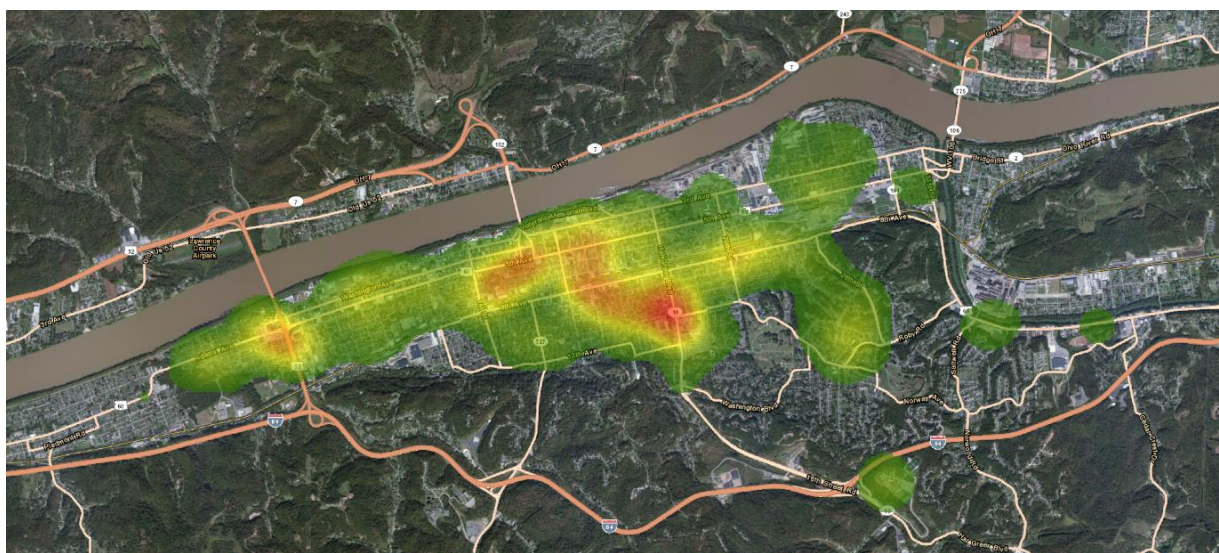


## Huntington Area Drug Epidemic

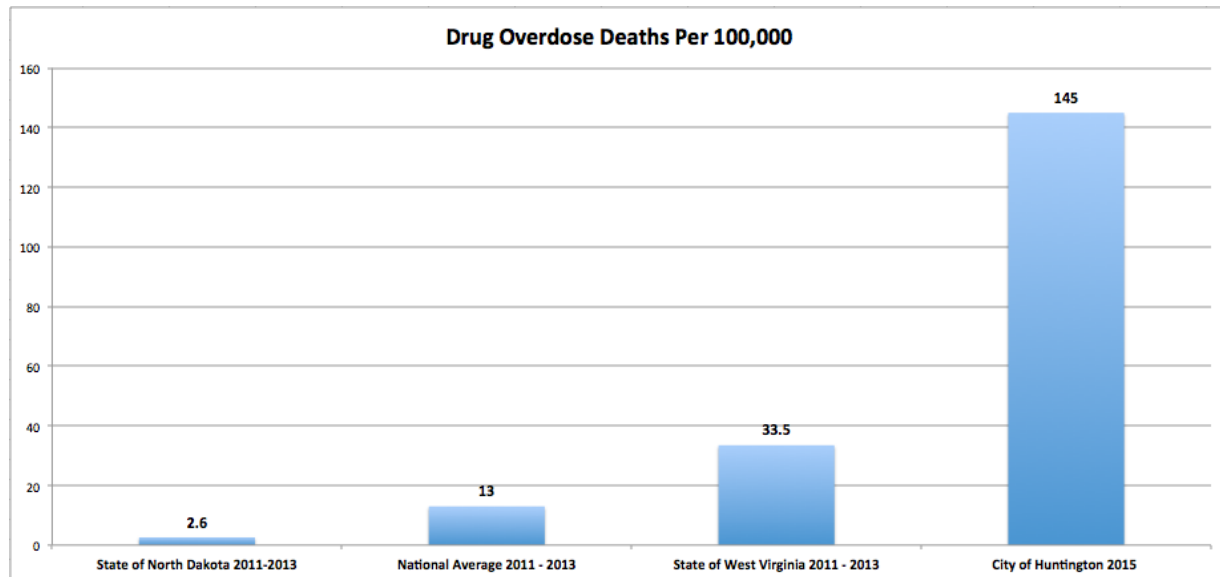


Drug Offenses 2004

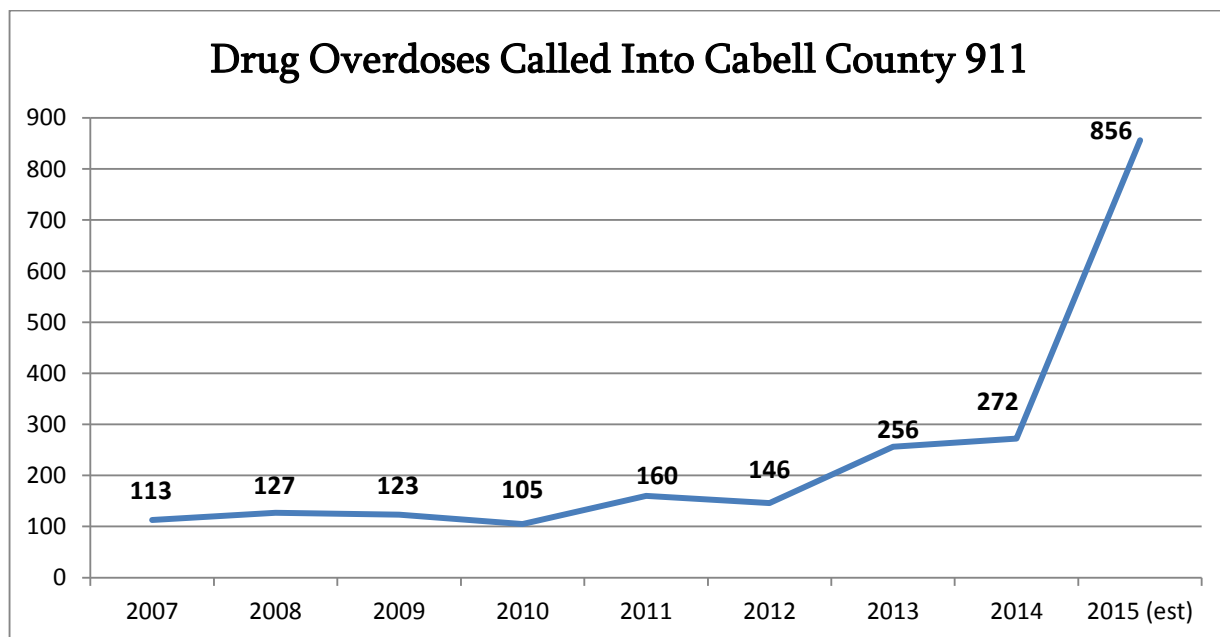
In 2004, drug offenses were centered on a two-block-by-two-block area in Fairfield West. A decade later, there is no section of Huntington that is not touched by the drug problem we face. Today, drug addiction touches all people no matter their age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, education or location.



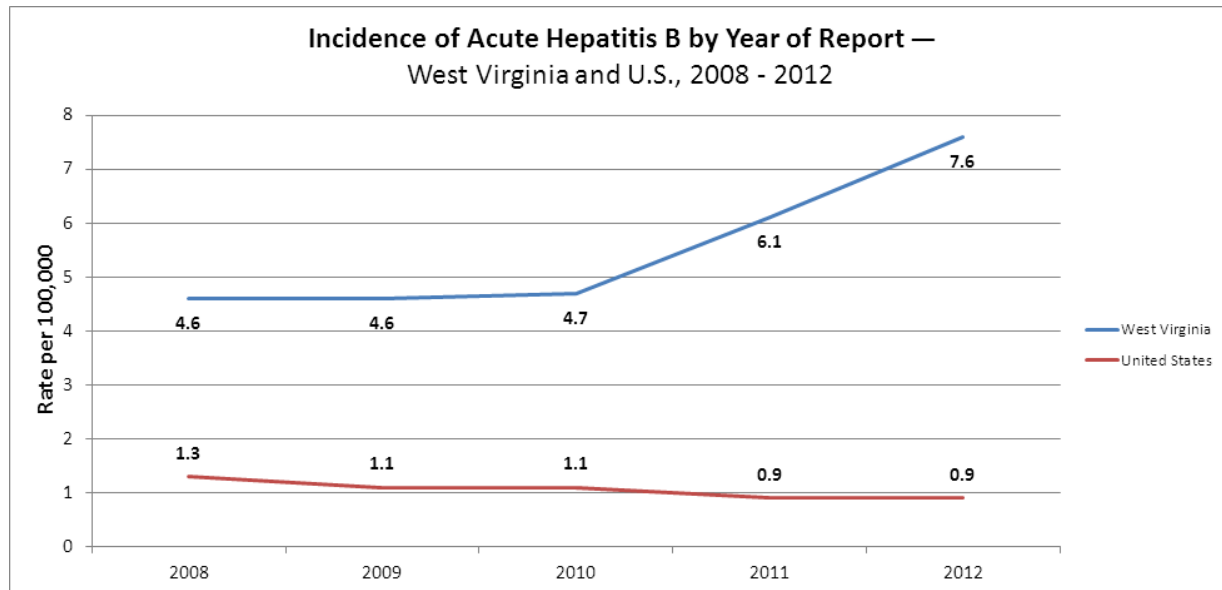
Drug Offenses 2014



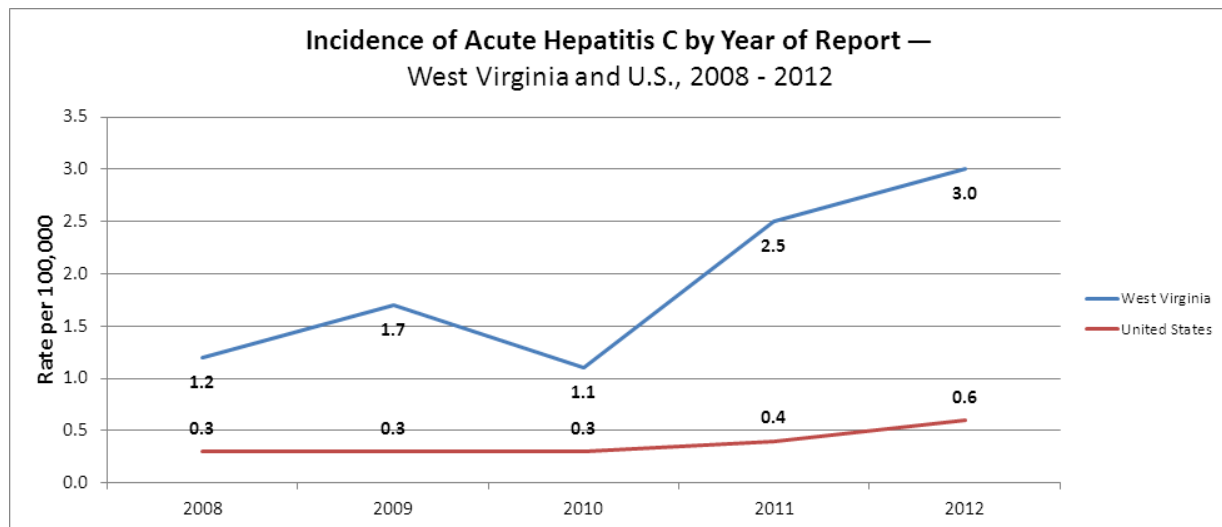
Recent studies have shown that North Dakota has the lowest rate of overdose deaths in the United States with a rate of 2.6 deaths per 100,000 people. The national average is at 13 deaths per 100,000 people. West Virginia has one of the highest rates of overdose deaths in the nation with a rate of 33.5 per 100,000 people. In 2015, at the current rate the City of Huntington is going, it will experience 145 deaths per 100,000 people.



Between 2007 and 2010, the number of overdoses in Cabell County was between 105 and 127. A noticeable increase occurred in 2011 with 160 overdoses. Overdoses spiked to more than 250 in both 2013 and 2014. At our current pace, Cabell County will experience 856 overdoses by the end of 2015.



The State of West Virginia has led the nation in new hepatitis B cases in the United States. The spike in new hepatitis B cases that began in 2010 coincides with the decrease in illegally diverted prescription medication and the increase in heroin. One of the startling things about this graph is that the national average is decreasing, mainly due to the fact that there is a vaccine for Hepatitis B.



West Virginia is second in the nation in new hepatitis C cases. Kentucky leads the nation in new hepatitis C cases. Again, the spike in new hepatitis C cases that began in 2010 coincides with the decrease in illegally diverted prescription medication and the increase in heroin.



## I. Prevention

**Strategic Goal:** To prevent individual's initial drug use and the deterioration to addiction in those who have already begun drug use.

### Objectives

1. Expand community prevention/intervention efforts
2. Reduce underage drinking and drug use
3. Reduce the number of babies born into an environment of addiction
4. Reduce the spread of blood borne pathogens through harm reduction programs

### Introduction:

Preventing drug and alcohol abuse and addiction increases people's chances of living long, healthy and productive lives. Drug abuse includes any inappropriate use of prescription drugs as well as over-the-counter drugs and any use of illicit drugs. Drug use can impede judgment and lead to harmful, risky behavior. Preventing drug and alcohol abuse improves quality of life, academic performance and workplace productivity. Prevention also reduces crime and criminal justice expenses, reduces motor vehicle crashes and lowers health care costs for acute and chronic conditions. Strengthening our partnership with CCSAPP, DEA and HIDTA will enhance prevention efforts.

### Priorities:

1. Programs for Boys/Girls Club, A.D. Lewis and St. John's House
2. Resources for parents to guide them in drug discussions with kids
3. Expand community prevention/intervention efforts

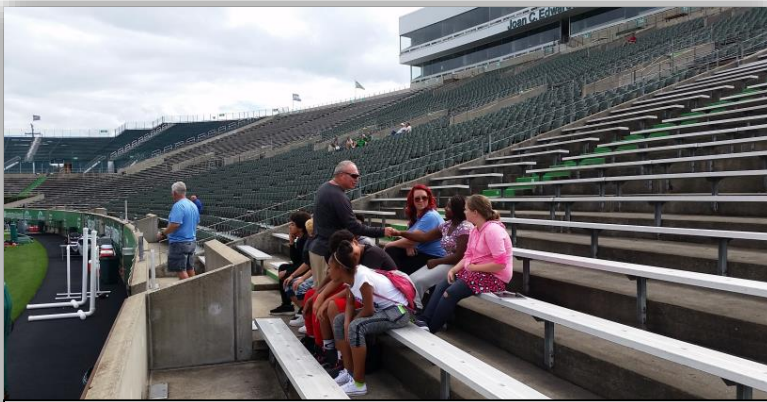
Preventing drug use before it begins is the most cost-effective, common-sense approach to promoting a safe, healthy and vibrant community. By preventing substance use, abuse, and dependence before it ever begins, we can save lives and cut costs related to healthcare, criminal justice and other public services. Prevention efforts should focus on not only stopping drug use, but also stopping current drug users from causing irreparable harm to themselves or others.

### Programs for Boys/Girls Club, A.D. Lewis and St. John's House

Young people today have to face many issues that the previous generation did not. Drug prevention efforts in the 1980s and 1990s focused on preventing initial contact with drugs (usually marijuana) and alcohol. Sadly, many young people today have initial contact at a younger age, and that contact usually involves a parent, guardian or other family member. For many of these young people in our

area, organizations and programs like the Boys & Girls Club, the A.D. Lewis Center and after school programs act as de facto parents.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy has partnered with the Marshall University Athletic



Marshall University Football Coach Doc Holiday meeting with youth from the Boys & Girls Club during a practice.

Department along with HIDTA and the DEA to form a mentoring program for area youth involving Marshall University athletes. This will give kids struggling with tough problems positive role models who prove there are other options besides the cycle of drug use and addiction plaguing our city. The mentoring program will focus on athletes

sharing advice and experiences while interacting with youth at the Boys & Girls Clubs, the A.D. Lewis Center and St. John's House. By providing positive role models, we hope to provide a better life for the next generation.

Studies have indicated that youth arrested have a 13% higher rate of dropping out of high school and a 23% increase of adult incarceration. By providing a positive police presence at the Boys & Girls Clubs as well as the A.D. Lewis Center and St. John's House, the gap between youth and law enforcement can be bridged. In the future, the Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy, in conjunction with the Huntington Police Department, will provide positive law enforcement role models with the youth in these centers. The physical presence of law enforcement officers in the community centers and after-school programs will provide positive interactions thus giving these children a positive opinion of law enforcement. Building these relationships with kids when they are young will change their lives forever.

Providing basic life skills for kids whose parents may not be equipped to teach them is also a piece of the prevention puzzle. Kids that have a fragmented family and life structures are ill-equipped to participate in basic social activities such as meal planning, money management skills, communication skills, manners, washing clothes, etc. Working with these programs to ensure that basic life skills are taught is another goal we are striving toward.

### **Resources for Parents**

Young people with stable parent and family structures are not immune from drug use and abuse. Providing tools and resources to the parent or guardian to help prevent drug use is of the utmost importance in our area. Peer pressure can lead even the most stable child to make bad decisions.

Currently, the Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy is working in conjunction with the Cabell County Substance Abuse Prevention Partnership (CCSAPP) and Appalachia High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) on a pilot program that will make available drug-testing kits called *Give Me a Reason*. These test kits are not meant to be used as a scare tactic against young people, but as a way to open a conversation between parent and child about the dangers of drug use. These test kits also give young people a way out of peer pressure situations. The possibility of being drug tested allows the young person the ability to say they cannot experiment with drugs.

Besides the drug kit, education material is provided to the parent on ways to protect their children, tips on how to communicate with their kids, monitor their activities, how to spot drug/alcohol use or abuse and what a parent should do when they find it. Today, parents can find it difficult to talk to their kids about experimenting with drugs, especially if they experimented when they were younger. The education provided includes tools to help open conversations between parent and child. We believe the education materials are just as vital, if not more important, than the drug-testing kits.

A priority for this office is finding more ideas and programs to expand the tools and resources that parents have at their disposal. One such program is HIDTA's *Operation Unites, On the Move*. Data is compiled and analyzed by the University of Kentucky. Resources for these valuable programs are provided by Appalachia HIDTA.

#### **Expand Community Prevention/Intervention Efforts**

Our area is fortunate to have many community prevention/intervention efforts underway. The foundation laid by the Cabell County Substance Abuse Prevention Partnership is solid. From teen summits to peer-to-peer mentoring and by expanding and supporting this coalition, we can empower our youth to prevent addiction.

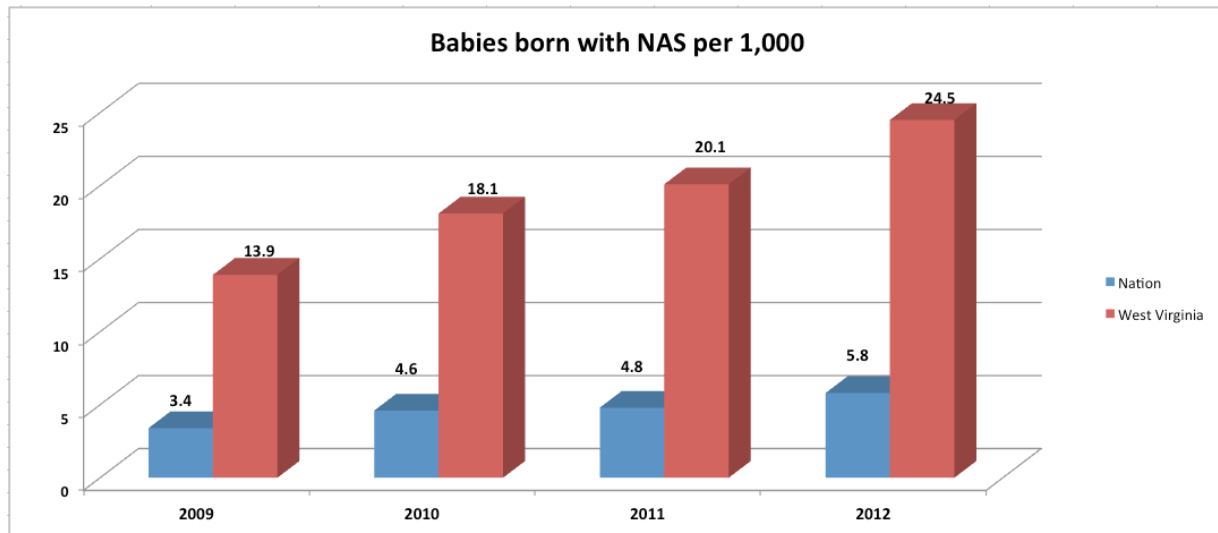
The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy has been instrumental in educating community leaders



and first responders on the need for a syringe-exchange program and other support services. The Cabell-Huntington Health Department will open the first Harm Reduction Program in West Virginia on September 2, 2015. The well-planned program will be all-encompassing and will include a syringe exchange, peer recovery coaches, education, testing for blood borne pathogens, vaccinations, addiction treatment referrals and other social services. Syringe-exchange programs in other areas of the country have reduced the number of new Hepatitis cases by more than 50% in just the first year of existence. Statistics also reveal that

more than 50% of participants in harm reduction programs not only accept treatment referrals but are also far more successful in their recovery. Several studies nationwide indicate that cities that have syringe-exchange programs have more than 60% fewer needle sticks for their first responders and

healthcare professionals. The estimated medical cost associated with drug use for Cabell County in 2015 is close to \$100 million. A harm reduction program is an effective and efficient way to reduce medical costs that affect all of the citizens of Huntington. Harm reduction programs save lives.



One significant issue surrounding addiction is infants born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). In 2014, more than 275 babies were born in Huntington hospitals with NAS. According to Marshall University School of Medicine Dean Dr. Joseph Shapiro, the rate of babies born addicted to drugs in Cabell County is nearly 100 times the national average. While a normal birth costs \$8,000 to \$10,000, the average cost of a birth involving NAS, which can cause birth defects, developmental problems, premature birth, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), is on average \$55,000. The MODCP, in conjunction with the Cabell-Huntington Health Department, has applied for a grant through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation seeking to build a shared data module and develop a data collection protocol to analyze real-time clinical, socioeconomic, public safety and behavioral health data to develop public health interventions and policies that will improve drug-related outcomes with a focus on lowering the number of infants in Cabell County born with NAS. A similar program in Tennessee has already reduced the number of babies born with NAS by approximately 80%. The repository would be housed at the Cabell-Huntington Health Department.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy has met with local school leaders as well as state legislators to discuss the possibilities for future prevention programs. Many surveys and studies support the fact that children are exposed to drug use at an alarmingly early age. Even by incorporating 15 minutes of awareness per day in a statewide curriculum would create a positive outcome.

## II. Treatment

**Strategic Goal:** To develop successful treatments for drug abuse and addiction, to expand existing successful treatment facilities and to improve treatment accessibility.

### Objectives

1. Promote the development/expansion of existing services
2. Establish a referral system for individuals seeking help
3. Promote treatment and recovery success stories in our area
4. Improve financial accessibility to services

### Introduction:

Because there are many underlying, complex factors for drug abuse and addiction, the Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy acknowledges the need for comprehensive approach to treating this devastating disease. Treatment services and recovery are not one size fits all (medically assisted, peer based counseling, faith based, etc.). Providing multiple options for individuals can lead to better success for recovery.

### Priorities:

1. Expanding services for long-term counseling programs
2. Expanding transitional housing
3. Promote career opportunities for people recovering
4. Develop a centralized information system

There has been a stigma associated with drug and alcohol abuse for years. Addiction is a disease. Those suffering from addiction are not bad people. They struggle just like people suffering from other diseases. We have a moral obligation to provide proper services for everyone. Someone struggling with drug and alcohol addiction may feel like recovery is an impossible process. The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy has initiated a Speaker's Bureau that will be led by Pete Thackston, a former professional athlete along with other members of the recovery community.

### Expanding services for long-term counseling programs

As of January 1, 2015, West Virginia had less than 500 treatment beds. This includes detox, 28-day, short-term and long-term treatment beds. Considering that approximately 152,000 West Virginians have a substance abuse problem, this is a recipe for disaster. Cabell County and the state need more readily available options and services for treatment and recovery. The waiting list for all facilities is

months long. For example, the most successful treatment facility in Huntington, The Recovery Point, has a six-month waiting list. When someone is ready for treatment, time is of the essence. It is all about the moment. If one who is asking for help cannot access services, all hope is lost.



Current efforts to expand treatment and recovery services revolve around peer-based counseling which is considered a best practices and has the greatest success across the country. The Recovery Point of Huntington has recently expanded from 78 to 100 beds. This facility is for men. HER Place is also a peer-based treatment program, which is looking for a building, so it can become a residential treatment facility. There are multiple, smaller treatment options in the area that are in desperate need of expansion.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy is working diligently with area legislators to secure funding to increase services for existing treatment facilities. Also, because not everyone suffering from addiction has the ability to leave a job and family for a long-term recovery program, there is a need for intensive, long-term outpatient services. Partnerships between St. Mary's Behavioral Health and Prester Center have been discussed for such programs.

### **Expanding Transitional Housing**

Huntington is the only city in West Virginia that has a land bank. The goal of the Huntington Land



Bank is to improve the community by putting viable properties and land into the ownership of those individuals and groups that will enhance them. By purchasing delinquent tax liens and offering the subsequent properties for sale through the Land Bank, the goal is to create a vehicle that allows all of us to benefit. Huntington has many abandoned and dilapidated housing due to population loss during the past 60 years. That, coupled with the need for transitional housing for people in recovery, makes this a perfect merger.



Transitional housing is an important step in the recovery process. We have an obligation to ensure that transitional living environments do not victimize those in recovery. Transitional living environments should include the following basic standards:

1. Professional support
2. Education services
3. Stable living environment
4. Low cost
5. Minimum health and safety standards

The end goal of all transitional housing facilities is to help the resident become a productive member of society.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy plans to partner with the Land Bank to provide affordable buildings and land for transitional housing. This will require us to partner with union workers, private organizations and others to remodel or build housing that meets basic health and safety standards for those in long-term recovery. We will also explore the possibility of bringing additional proven, reputable transitional housing specialists into the area. We would like Huntington to create a model that can be duplicated throughout the state for transitional housing.

#### **Promote career opportunities for people recovering**

One of the biggest obstacles that a person in recovery must face is the stigma associated with their addiction. This becomes amplified when searching for employment. On the other hand, employers in our area have a difficult time finding workers who can pass a drug test. The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy will work with labor and business leaders to create a "recovery safe zone" for employees, reduce the stigma associated with those in long-term recovery and provide opportunities for education and employment.

#### **Develop a Centralized Information System**

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy began talking to those on the front line of addiction about what was needed. It became increasingly clear that a real-time database of resources in our community was needed. Individuals, faith-based communities, first responders and family members may not know what services are available to help those suffering from drug and alcohol addiction. For this reason, a real-time, easily-accessible database needs to be available for information sharing and distribution.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy has partnered with the United States Attorney's Office, Western Regional Day Report Center and Trifecta Productions to create a database/multimedia platform to provide information. It includes real-time bed availability along with



vital information on how to recognize an overdose and how to provide life-saving measures for those who have overdosed. All available regional and state resources will be included such as AA meetings, treatment facilities, medical services, recovery housing and more. This is a pilot program that could easily be expanded statewide or nationally.

### III. Law Enforcement

**Strategic Goal:** Continue to partner with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies and focus enforcement on drug dealers while directing addicts through social services.

**Objectives**

1. Ensure drug dealers are prosecuted through the justice system
2. Ensure users are provided resources for treatment
3. Strengthen ties with U.S. Attorney's Office, Prosecutor's Office and federal law enforcement agencies

**Introduction:**

For the past 40 years, we have been fighting the drug war in the same manner. It has become increasingly obvious during the past decade that we cannot arrest our way out of the drug problem. We must attack this issue on both the supply and demand side. At the state and local levels, there are many common sense approaches we can take to make our area and state a more difficult place to sell illegal drugs while also helping addicts into treatment programs.

**Priorities:**

1. Strengthen law enforcement and prosecutors' abilities
2. Expansion of drug courts and L.E.A.D
3. Felony clemency

**Strengthen Law Enforcement and Prosecutors' Abilities**

For the same reasons we were the center of an economic boom for decades – the varying transportation systems into Huntington -- we are now an epicenter for drug distribution. We need to change the mentality of out-of-state drug dealers coming into our area. West Virginia is currently considered an easy target by mid-level and higher dealers due to archaic laws and the high rate of addiction.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy continues to facilitate meetings with West Virginia legislators on specific common sense laws that target drug dealers, not addicts. This is made possible with the help of local leaders, which include: Patricia Keller, Cabell County Drug Court Judge; Sean Hammers, Prosecuting Attorney for Cabell County; Sharon Frazier, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney



for Cabell County; Suzan Williamson, Resident Agent in Charge for DEA; and Kenny Burner, Assistant Director, Appalachia HIDTA.

The first issue that needs to be addressed is enhancing conspiracy laws. A separate crime of drug conspiracy under Article 60A (the controlled substance area of the law) with a greater penalty would be helpful. The federal statute regarding conspiracy states, “Any person who attempts or conspires to commit any offense defined in this subchapter shall be subject to the same penalties as those prescribed for the offense, the commission of which was the object of the attempt or conspiracy.” (The subchapter referred to is the drug trafficking laws.) This would place more emphasis on the dealer who brings the illegal substance into the area

instead of the addict that sells to support their habit.

Secondly, changing specific laws from indeterminate sentencing to determinate sentencing will allow judges to sentence mid- to upper-level drug dealers in a more appropriate manner. Indeterminate imprisonment is the imposition of a sentence by imprisonment with no definite period of time set during sentencing. Its length, rather, is determined by a parole board during imprisonment. A determinate sentence is a jail or prison sentence that has a defined length and can’t be changed by a parole board or other agency. Along with this is a need to enhance sentencing for drug dealers based on the quantity of illegal substances they deliver or possess with intent to distribute. We propose that sentences be tied in some way to weight. Right now, it is the same potential penalty whether we catch someone selling a half of a gram of heroin or someone holding 100 grams. The court could then sentence according to the weight (or other factors). Currently, under federal law, dealers receive increased sentences in correlation to the volume. West Virginia law needs to mirror such federal guidelines.

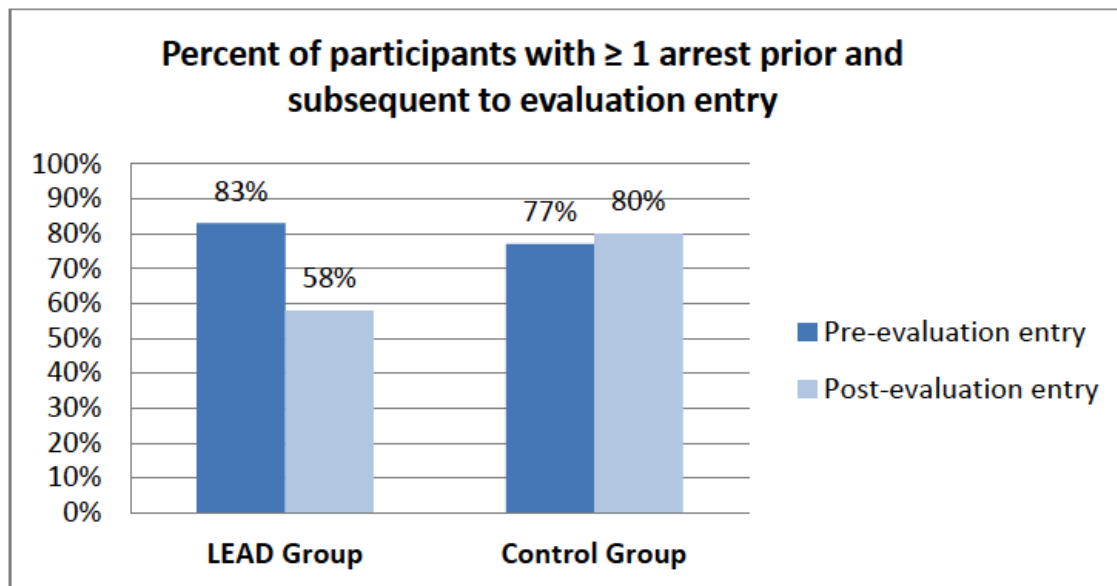
Finally, the safety of our first responders and the residents of Huntington are compromised due to the increasing violence associated with mid-level and higher-level drug dealers possessing firearms. Presently, there is no crime for having a gun while trafficking drugs. We propose a statute whereby it is a separate felony to possess a firearm in connection to a drug trafficking crime. There is a federal statute to that effect now and a similar state statute is needed. Another option would be an enhanced penalty for a drug trafficking conviction if the court finds that a firearm was used/possessed in connection with the crime. Along the lines as the firearm enhancement found in the crimes against persons where a court’s finding of a firearm requires that the defendant serve a third of the sentence or a minimum of 5 years whichever is greater. It would convert a drug trafficking sentence from a 1-15 years to a 5-15.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy will continue to explore all available avenues for additional state code revisions for local law enforcement. By working with traditional and social media the message will be clear -- Huntington will not tolerate drug dealers.

### **Expansion of Drug Courts and LEAD**

Cabell County Drug Court is a collaborative effort of legal, mental health, education and social service professionals who provide comprehensive treatment and rehabilitative services for non-violent drug and alcohol abusing offenders. Cabell County Drug Court provides intensive treatment, supervision, drug testing and monitoring to achieve successful treatment outcomes. LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) is a pre-arrest diversion program designed to address low-level drug and prostitution crimes. Offenders can be diverted to community based treatment or other support services instead of the criminal justice system. The ultimate goal of LEAD is to improve public safety and reduce criminal behavior.

Both of these programs embrace a diversionary model to reduce overcrowding and recidivism within the criminal justice system. These proven programs are far more cost effective than incarceration. In West Virginia the average cost of incarcerating someone at a regional jail is \$48.25 per day. Peer based recovery centers can treat and house someone for approximately \$27 per day. Evaluation of other programs in the country found that LEAD was associated with significantly reduced recidivism. People in LEAD were 60% less likely to be arrested within the first 6 months and 58% less likely to be arrested over the course of the program.



The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy has applied for a BJA and SAMHSA grant that will expand the capabilities of the current drug court system in Cabell County. If received, the Cabell County Adult Drug Court will launch the Women's Empowerment and Addiction Recovery (W.E.A.R.) Program, which will be a specialized track within the current drug court that expands the drug

court's services to address the unique needs of drug-addicted prostitutes. The participants will go through the standard drug court model, but will also receive specialized trauma-informed services (particularly counseling/therapy) to comprehensively address their mental and physical health issues, helping them to leave the sex trade and become healthy, productive members of society. This will not only be the first program of its kind in the state, it will also help stop the deterioration of neighborhoods where prostitution and drug activity are prevalent and have lead to the devaluation of property and have lowered the quality of life.

The Huntington Police Department is implementing a LEAD Program. This program is collaboration between The U.S. Attorney's Office, the Prester Center, Cabell County Day Report Center and the Cabell County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. This program will target nonviolent drug addicts and people accused of drug-related crimes.

### **Felony Clemency**

Those who suffer from addiction typically have a criminal record due to their drug use. Career opportunities are quite limited with such a record. Once in recovery, finding skill- or education-based employment is difficult at best. Historically, the lack of employment opportunities is a known trigger for relapse. Many businesses in Huntington have difficulties finding qualified employees that can pass a drug test. Many people in recovery are drug tested on a regular basis, which can make them more attractive to employers.

Statewide legislation providing a path for individuals to expunge their record is necessary for individuals who received non-violent felony convictions related to their drug use. There are many people in recovery who have turned their lives around. They have received higher education degrees or have received high-end, trade-based training and are unable to secure employment. These previous drug-based felony convictions should not prevent someone who has turned their life around from gainful employment. Currently, the only way to have a felony conviction expunged is by a Governor pardon.

The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy has met with area legislators concerning a felony clemency program. Such a program would need strict appropriate guidelines for individuals to follow. This would be a multi-year process with many steps including clean drug screens for consecutive years, completion of education and/or job skills training, clean criminal record for multiple years, etc. Felony clemency will be a process and not easily earned. However, for individuals who have straightened out their life, this is a necessary step to move them back to being productive members of society.





